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ABSTRACT

This document presents analyses of data obtained in an investigation of characteristics of students in preservice certification programs at a metropolitan urban university, as they enter a limited job market, and a comparison of these students to those who entered the job market in more opportune times. Forty-five juniors, seniors, and post-degree students seeking certification in elementary or secondary education were administered the Minnesota Teaching Attitude Inventory, the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale, the Study of Values, a questionnaire and Self-Profile, and an opinionnaire. Analyses of the data received through these instruments resulted in the following conclusions: (1) the majority of the subjects have a supportive attitude towards children and schools; (2) a very high percentage have positive feelings about themselves, have integrated personalities, and relate well to others; (3) the majority favor the aesthetic, social, and religious perspectives on life, and score below the mean in economic, theoretical, and political areas; (4) the majority want to teach to fulfill a need to be of service to youth or to society; (5) most feel very strongly about their career choice, are willing to wait for job openings, and willing to prove themselves through substitute teaching; (6) the group outperforms the norm group in attitude and self-concept, despite gloomy employment predictions. Recommendations developed from this data analysis are (1) more useful information may be gathered from a self-profile if lead questions were included to stimulate thinking; (2) the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale provides useful screening for counseling purposes if administered at admission; and (3) a planned advisement program in career planning and career alternatives is needed. (MJB)

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A CRITICAL LOOK AT TEACHER CANDIDATES OF THE SEVENTIES COMPETING FOR LIMITED TEACHING POSITIONS

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Historically, the preparation of competent, new teachers has been a responsibility assumed by the university to fulfill the educational needs of society. However, the current shortage of teaching positions has caused considerable concern for both the university and the student seeking admission to the profession. The seventies will certainly be characterized as an era when the challenge of finding a teaching position assumed, in the words of Alfred Lightfoot, a Darwinian flavor. Only the most persistent survived. In his book, Inquiries into the Social Foundations of Education, Alfred Lightfoot underscores the magnitude of the problem.

> For the first time in a century, there is no shortage and public school teachers are having to scramble for jobs. The buyers are no longer in need, and teacher supply far exceeds demand in almost every academic field and across every educational level.[1]

This reality has taken its toll. Students are market sensitive and dropping enrollments reflect that sensitivity. Unfortunately, the "over-supply" of teachers is not entirely the natural outcome of reduced birthrates as is sometimes assumed. Certainly, the lack of community support, reduction of federal monies which supported many educational projects, and millage and bond vote losses have contributed to the kind of economic belt-tightening which has resulted in more and more consolidation, and hence, a

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[1]Alfred Lightfoot, Inquiries into the Social Foundations of Education (Chicago: Rank McNally & Co., 1972), p.357.

reduction in positions available. Nevertheless, despite gloomy forecasts, a number of students are holding fast to their career choice and are enrolling in teacher certification programs.

The purpose of this study was to take a critical look at today's teacher-candidates who must compete for limited teaching positions and compare them to those who entered the job market under more optimistic circumstances. A number of questions surfaced. Why are students pursuing teaching as a career in spite of the economic picture? Do today's teacher candidates differ on standardized tests which were designed and validated in an era when teacher supply was not a problem? Are there personal characteristics that would yield a clue about the kinds of persons who are seeking admission to the profession today? In the search for answers to these and other questions, some selected tests were administered, a survey questionnaire and an opinionaire were designed and used, and a checklist was constructed for analyzing the statements of intent written by students in their "Self-Profiles."

The forty-five subjects for this study were juniors, seniors, and post-degree students seeking certification at the elementary and secondary school levels in spring semester of 1976. The subjects of the study reside in various communities within a large metropolitan area. They represent a cross section of ages (from 19 to 41+). The majority are female. It is understood that the results of this study reflect a population unique

to this particular institution at this particular time and are not necessarily generalizable to any other population.

It seems appropropriate at this point to identify in more detail the materials used and to report the results of each. When all such information has been presented, conclusions will be drawn and recommendation will be made.

The materials used in this study were selected or constructed to yield specific information. The battery of standarized tests reflected three major areas of concern: attitude towards teaching; one's view of oneself (self-concept); and one's value systems. The attitudinal test administered was Form A of the Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory by Walter W. Cook, Carroll H. Leeds, and Robert Callis. This test is based on 10 years of experimentation and was standardized, using teachers from a variety of communities, schools, and grade levels. The results of the test were published in 1951. The Tenessee Self-Concept Scale designed by William H. Fitts was used to gather data on perception of self. This test represents 20 years of reseach. In 1964 data was gathered using teachers and nursing students. The means and variances for this population are comparable to the norm group. Information on personal value systems was sought by administering the Study of Values by Gordon Allport, Philip E. Vernon, and Gardner Lindzey. This test was standarized on a heterogeneous college population. Though the test dates back to 1931, the norms were updated in 1960. A questionnarie as well as an opinionaire were designed by the researchers to gather pertinent data on each subject as well as to secure the subject's reaction to select questions. Finally, a checklist was constructed to assist the researchers in analyzing the written statements of intent which appear in every application to the teacher certification program.

THE MINNESOTA TEACHING ATTITUDE INVENTORY

The Minnesota Teaching Attitude Inventory (MTAI) was designed to measure those attitudes of teachers which predict how well they will get along with pupils and, indirectly, how well satisfied they will be with teaching as their selected career. The inventory measures a subject's responses to statements that focus on both desirable and undesirable teacher-pupil relations and on classroom environments. The rationale of the test designers is that attitudes are a key factor in identifying a quality teacher. A quality teacher, in their opinion, is one that will "maintain a state of harmonious relations with his pupils characterized by mutual affection and sympathetic understanding."[2]

After comparing the percentiles of the subjects in this study with national norms, it is clear that the majority of subjects have a positive and supportive attitude toward children and the schools. One-third (33%) of all the subjects in the study had percentile rankings well above the national mean. Furthermore, the mean percentile for subjects in this study seeking elementary school certification approached the mean for experienced teachers with four years training. The mean percentile for subjects in this study seeking secondary school certification surpassed the mean for experienced teachers in secondary schools with four years training.

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[2]Walter W. Cook, Carroll H. Leeds, and Robert Callis, Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory-Manual (New York: The Psychological Corporation, 1951), p.3.

The standard deviation (1.43) indicates that the attitudes of the teacher candidates are more homogenous than the population on which the test was initially standarized (standard deviation being 38.7).

There was a tendency--understandably so--for subjects who scored either high or low on the MTAI to score similarly on the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS). This correlation reinforces the position at the MTAI test designers. They claim that teachers scoring low on the inventory tend to be frustrated and socially insecure human beings.

TENNESSEE SELF-CONCEPT SCALE

The apparent correlation between an individual's outward behavior and inner disposition prompted the selection and use of the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale. Initially, the TSCS was designed to serve the needs of the Tennessee Department of Mental Health. However, the instrument has enjoyed wide applicability and has been helpful in a variety of counseling settings.

The TSCS measures one's self-concept. A subject is asked to respond to 100 statements that are descriptions of "self". Responses can be made in five different ways and the resulting scores are then plotted on a graph. These graphs can be compared to norms for a normal population as well as to norms for a population whose behavior has been judged to be abnormal. The scores can be viewed from several different perspectives. For purposes of this study, the researchers selected to examine the scores in four different ways.

The first analysis was an examination of scores in terms of the number of deviant signs (NDS) evident in the responses. This is an empirical measure that involves a simple count. The higher the count, the higher the probability of deviancy in some major aspect of personality. In this study the range of deviant signs by subject range from 1 to 22. Over 65% of the subjects had five or fewer deviant signs. The median for a normal population is 4.4. This would suggest that the majority of subjects in this study do, indeed, think positively of themselves. Approximately nine percent (9%) had more than ten deviant signs. These subjects also scored extremely low on the MTAI.

The second analysis was in terms of the total "P" score. The "P" score yields a percentile ranking; the higher the percentile ranking, the more positive the self-concept. The one exception is an abnormally high percentile which is also an indication of disorder. Seventy-nine percent of the subjects in this study scored at or above the 50th percentile. Again, this suggests that most subjects have positive self-concepts.

The third examination of scores was in terms of "Variability." This is an assessment of discrepancies among the responses. The scores on "Variability" yield a percentile ranking. However, in this instance, the lower the percentile ranking, the more integrated the subject's personality. In terms of personality

integration, 72.1% of the subjects in this study scored below the 50th percentile.

The scores were then examined in terms of percentile ranking in the column labeled "Social Self." The responses in this area measure one's perception of self as a social human being. The higher the percentile ranking, the higher the ability to relate well to other human beings. Over 88% of the subjects in this study scored above the 50th percentile. This correlates well with the scores obtained from the MTAI.

STUDY OF VALUES

The third instrument used to gather information about the subjects in this study was the Study of Values. Its aim is "to measure the relative prominence of six basic motives or interests in personality: the theoretical, economic, aesthetic, social,political, and religious."[3] The instrument is based directly on Edward Spranger's Types of Men. Spranger stressed that the personalities of individuals are best revealed through a study of their value systems. Research conducted with the Study of Values suggests that certain profiles are more characteristic of certain occupational groups than of others. It was anticipated that the results would correlate well with the results of the

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[3]Gordon W. Allport, Phillip E. Vernon, and Gardner Lindzey, Study of Values (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1970) p.3.

other tests and, at the same time, would yield new information.

The "theoretical" person values knowledge and is critical, observant, rational, and constantly searching for ways to systematize knowledge. The general mean for a college population, combined sexes, for this characteristic is 39.80. The standard deviation for the teacher candidates in this study is 5.80 and 7.27 for the population on which the test was standarized. Forty-one percent (41%) of the subjects in this study scored above the mean. Further, no females scored below the acceptable level, whereas, three males did score below the acceptable level.

The "economic" person tends to be utilitarian in his approach to life, highly practical and interested in applied knowledge. The general mean for this characteristic is 40.33. The standard deviation for the subjects in this study is 7.47 and for the norm group, 7.61. Of the subjects in this study, approximately 30% scored above the mean. Three males and four females had outstandingly low scores. This may indicate that the accumulation of material wealth is not a key concern for this occupational group.

The "aesthetic" person is inclined to be self-sufficient and individualistic. Such a person values form, harmony and beauty. The general national mean for this characteristic is 39.45. The standard deviation for the subjects in this study is 7.49 and for the norm group, 8.42. Over 68% of the subjects in this study scored above the mean. No males or females had outstandingly low scores.

The "social" individual is concerned with good personal relationahips and displays a kind, sympathetic, and unselfish attitude. Altruism is typical. The general national mean for this characteristic is 39.56. The standard deviation of the subjects in this study is 5.68 and for the norm group, 7.03. A high percentage (75%) of the subjects in this study scored above the mean. No males had outstandingly low scores. However, three females did score outstandingly low.

The "political" person is interested in power, seeks leadership roles, renown, and influence. The general national mean for this characteristic is 40.61. The standard deviation of the subjects in this study is 6.46 and for the norm group, 6.44. Only 29.5% of the subjects in this study scored above the mean. One male and five females scored outstandingly low.

The "religious" individual sees unity as the highest of values, seeks an affirmation of life, and views the cosmos as a whole. This individual is sometimes described as mystical. The general national mean for this characteristic is 40.51. The standard deviation of the subjects in this study is 9.11 and for the norm group, 9.31. Of the subjects in this study, 47.7% scored above the mean. No males but six females scored outstandingly low on this characteristic.

OTHER DATE-GATHERING INSTRUMENTS

In addition to the standardized tests, subjects were asked to complete a questionnaire about themselves. The questions dealt with their age, marital status, family responsibilities, educational experiences, employment experiences, and familiarity with languages. As noted in the chart, most of the subjects were in the 19 to 25 year age-group.

AGE	PERCENTAGE
19-25	68.2%
26-30	11.4%
31-35	6.8%
36-40	2.2%
41 and over	11.4%

The majority of subjects in this study were pursuing teaching as a first career choice. In the older age groups, the subjects were beginning teacher certification programs after having raised their families or after having experienced other types of employment.

The statistics regarding sex and marital status were not surprising. Of all the subjects in the study 84% are female, 16% are male. Regarding marital status, 61% of the subjects are single, 30% are married, and 9% are divorced. The majority of the subjects were either juniors or seniors. About 12% of the subjects were post-degree students seeking certification. Half of the subjects were pursuing elementary certification; the other half were seeking secondary certification. It was also interesting to note that 87% of the subjects had "some" to "extensive" experiences with children prior to their commitment to teaching. Also, about half of the subjects are employed and half are not.

Students applying for admission to the Division of Education are asked to complete the "Application for Admission to the Teacher Certification Program." The second page of the form is entitled "Self-Profile". Students are directed to "Use the space below to write about YOURSELF".

The researchers developed a checklist for analyzing the statements made by students in their "Self Profile". The checklist is divided into five classifications:

I. Statements Regarding One's Self
II. Statements Regarding Teaching As a Career
III. Statements Regarding Life Experiences
IV. Statements Regarding Future Goals
V. Communication Skills

The first four classifications were analyzed as a single unit. A simple count was made of positive comments, negative comments, and lack of any comments. The fifth category was analyzed separately in terms of performance. The communication skills were judged to be good, adequate, or weak.

In developing the Checklist with the five classifications, the researchers made several assumptions. First, it appeared to them that when an applicant looked at a page and a half (pages 2 and 3 of the Application for Admission to the Teacher Certification Program) which is almost completely blank except for the pagination, a general title--"Self Profile", and a simple statement of direction "Use the space below to write about YOURSELF", that one would, indeed, write about oneself. Secondly, in writing about oneself in the context of this particular application, it was assumed that an individual would make comments about teaching as a career selection, life experiences pertaining to career goals, and future aspirations. Thirdly, it was assumed that an applicant's communication skills, sophistication in completing applications, and organization in writing would be reflective of the extent and depth of information that a subject was willing to share. Some applicants were rather prolific while others gave very meager information. Therefore,

an applicant who wrote a few, brief sentences and did not make any comments regarding Statements II, III, or IV of the Checklist would have a greater number of unchecked items, whereas an applicant who wrote abundantly and directed his statements to the classifications on the Checklist would probably have fewer unchecked items.

As a group, including the first four classifications as one unit, a total of 366 positive statements were made. Sixty-percent of the subjects made more than the average number of positive statements. Only two negative statements were recorded, and both were in the Self-Profile of a single subject.

There were 734 unchecked items for the entire group. Since no comments were made by the subjects on topics that the researchers thought pertinent, this raised some questions. Was the construction of the checklist faulty? Is there a general reluctance to respond to such an open-ended request? Would it be more productive to list lead questions in order to obtain a more complete response? Is this an opportunity for students to demonstrate their frustrations in filling out forms of any kind by limiting their responses?

In communication skills, 64% of the subjects were evaluated as "good", 18% as "adequate", 18% as "weak". In assessing these skills, the researchers looked at paragraphing, sentence structure, spelling, plan of organization, and style of presentation.

Based on the researchers' many years of university teaching, the results seem quite typical and reflective of the writing skills of any general university population.

An opinionaire was also administered. The subjects were asked to react to two questions: Why did you decide to pursue teaching as a career? What feelings do you have today about your choice when you read about surplus teachers? The responses were lengthy. However, it was possible to ferret out the most frequently mentioned reasons and feelings.

The responses to the first question were not surprising. Many subjects selected teaching as a career because they "liked to work with children and people". Related reasons were the enjoyment of watching children learn and a feeling of satisfaction in having something to do with the process itself. The third most expressed comment was the desire to make their subject matter or content specialization interesting to students because "it is so important" for participation and survival in today's society. Also, many of them confirmed their selection of teaching as a career because of their limited, yet gratifying, laboratory field experiences in the schools. Some felt strongly, that even though the shortage of teaching positions existed, there was still a definite need for "good" teachers. Serving society, enjoying job security, good working conditions, and broadening themselves by fulfilling the academic requirements for a degree were other responses to the first question.

Responding to the second question of the opinionarie, many of the statements were repetitive. Being aware that there is a surplus in the job market, the subjects still felt that schools needed "good" and "dedicated" teachers who "liked children" and wanted to see them learn. "I think there are a lot of teachers in the classroom who do not belong there." "It doesn't scare me off, for it has always been a major goal." Some of the subjects felt that getting a teaching certificate was not a total waste. If they didn't get a full-time position, they would substitute. Others felt that the knowledge gained could be used in many other fields. "My feelings are exactly the same. Eventually, I will be hired. It is still the only career I like so what difference does it make?" "I still want to teach and will pursue this goal until I reach it. Teaching gives you a very broad background and there are a lot of things I could do with it." "There are too many teachers that aren't qualified to teach, and I feel that I want to do something about it, by being a good teacher, myself." "It makes me more determined to be the best teacher possible." "I will go on to receive my teaching certificate because teaching is what I want to do."

Generally, the comments revealed a strong commitment to teaching as a career and a rather optimistic feeling that there is a position for well-trained and concerned individuals in teaching. Their idealism, steadfastness, and perserverance, in spite of the difficulties in obtaining a teaching position, are certainly to be admired. Hopefully, these students, and others like them will find opportunities to use their talents and competencies in worthwhile and useful ways for the betterment of society.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to take a critical look at today's teacher-candidates as they enter a limited job market, and also, to compare them to those who entered the job market at a more opportune time, pior to the 1970's. The population consisted of students in certification programs at a university in a metropolitan urban area. In light of the data gathered, the following conclusions are warranted.

1. The majority of the subjects in this study have a supportive attitude towards children and schools. One-third go beyond the national mean and outperform even experienced teachers in attitude.

2. A very high percentage of subjects in this study have positive feelings about themselves, have integrated personalities, and relate well to others.

3. A majority of subjects in this study tend to favor the aesthetic, social and religious perspectives on life. Generally, they scored below the mean in the economic, theoretical, and political areas. It appears that this group of subjects has strong inclinations to be of service to others rather than being inclined to seek

fame and fortune. This reinforces their selection of teaching for humanitarian reasons since monetary rewards in teaching are generally below that of other comparable careers.

4. A majority of subjects in this study are selecting teaching as a career either to fulfill a personal need to be of service to youth or out of a desire to fulfill a need in society.

5. An overwhelming majority feel very strongly about their career choice, are willing to wait for job openings, and wish to prove themselves as competent teachers through substituting.

6. It appears that this group of subjects outperforms the norm group in attitude and self-concept. They have an extraordinarily strong drive to pursue their career goal despite gloomy predictions for employment.

It was an assumption of the researchers that teacher candidates of the seventies are qualitatively different. The natural selection which occurs during hard economic times did, indeed, occur in the teaching profession in the seventies. Therefore, it was not altogether surprising that subjects in this study scored as they did.

In spite of the economic environment, the young people in this study remain committed, idealistic, and enthusiastic about the contribution they can make to society. They demonstrate the cherished American ideals of accepting a challenging situation, believing in themselves, and trusting society to meet its commitment to education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

After using the materials for this study and working with the resulting data, two recommendations can be made.

1. More useful information might be gathered in a self-profile if a few lead questions were included to stimulate thinking.

2. For counseling purposes, administering the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale to all students upon admission would provide useful acreening.

Furthermore, it became clear in the many discussions held with the teacher candidates during the course of the investigation that a planned advisement program was necessary. For, even as students in the study reaffirmed their commitment to teaching as a career, they were not well informed of the actual employment situation. Their comments were general and vague and indicated very little information concerning "why" positions were limited, where positions might be available, and the alternative career choices for an individual with a teaching qualifications. Therefore, there should be planned program to apprise students of the employment situation at regular intervals. Too, there ought to be opportunities for students to meet and to discuss career alternatives.

NOTES

[1]Alfred Lightfoot, Inquiries into the Social Foundations of Education (Chicago: Rank McNally and Co., 1972), p.357.

[2]Walter W. Cook, Carroll H. Leeds, and Robert Callis, Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory-Manual (New York: The Psychological Corporation, 1951), p.3.

[3]Gordon W. Allport, Phillip E. Vernon, and Gardner Lindzey, Study of Values (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1970), p.3.

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